

PEOPLE & THINGS

WHEN I read of Mr. Oliver Lyttelton's triumph in the House on Wednesday, my mind went back to the spring of this year when I happened to be staying with Mr. Somerset Maugham in his beautiful villa at Cap Ferrat. We were talking about people and books and it seemed natural to ask if Maugham had ever contemplated writing the life of any of his contemporaries. His answer startled me. "There is only one person I would like to write about," he said. "Oliver Lyttelton."

Alas, Maugham refused to elaborate on his choice, but I reflected that I would never in my life hear a greater compliment paid by one man to another.

Bermuda Tycoons

I AM not sure that Bermuda deserves the limelight in which she is bathing. There was that curious affair of her refusal to allow B.O.A.C. tourist flights to set down and pick up passengers, and then, during the Queen's visit, the failure to invite any man of colour to the State dinner—a mistake happily not repeated at Friday's dinner to the Big Three—caused offence throughout the Commonwealth. Rich and narrow-minded merchants have acquired too much power in the Colony's affairs, and their preoccupation with the dollars of American honeymoon couples has blinded them to other aspects of the island's welfare.

As an example, what was once one of the most beautiful islands in the world has through neglect lost its greatest pride, the exquisite cedars on which Bermuda's prosperity was founded 250 years ago. No serious attempt was made to arrest oyster-shell scale and juniper scale, the diseases from which every single cedar tree has now perished, leaving grey skeletons where ten years ago there were emerald forests. Jamaica, with a touch of practical brilliance, offered "a million tree salute" to the Queen. A similar gesture would restore Bermuda's beauty and her place in our esteem.

The President's Golf

LAST June I inspected the Mid-Ocean Club where the present conference is being held, and also the golf course. On this occasion we would all like General Eisenhower to realise at last his dearest dream and, on British soil, complete a course in under eighty strokes. But I am afraid he is unlikely to approach that figure at the spectacular Mid-Ocean even with the help of the local rule that allows you to pick without penalty out of crab-holes. Which reminds me (and I hope won't remind too many of my readers) of the cable received from Moscow by the State Department reading "Malenkov broke eighty today." "Good Heavens" exploded Mr. Dulles. "this means war!"

An English Treasure

THE most valuable book in private hands in this country is undoubtedly the tenth-century benedictional at Chatsworth. The only time it has ever left this country, for exhibition in Paris in 1951, it was insured for £100,000, but it is in fact priceless.

The book is a manuscript with very rich ornamentation and seven full-page devotional paintings. The

By ATTICUS



OXFORD TRIPLE CROWN, 1643

On a chance visit to the Coin Department of Messrs. Spinks I was shown a coin which I was interested to learn is the largest gold piece ever minted in England. After the Battle of Edgehill, Charles I retired to Oxford, replenishing his coffers with bullion and plate extorted from the heads of Colleges and then melted down and minted at Oxford from 1642 to 1646. The most "generous" donors were All Souls and Exeter. The Triple Crown, 1½ inches in diameter, with a face value of sixty shillings, was designed by the famous engraver Nicholas Briot.

text is a collection of the benedictions used during the liturgical year in the celebration of the Mass and on the last page is a painting of a bishop blessing his flock. This is thought to represent St. Aethelwold, Bishop of Winchester from A.D. 963 to 984, for whom the book was prepared.

Aethelwold's instructions to his chaplain, a monk called Godeman, to prepare the text are written in the book, and perhaps he also made the pictures, which are considered the principal glory of the Winchester School of miniaturists whence came the finest work of this kind in England.

It is more than possible that this great masterpiece may be acquired by the nation.

The Inscrutable East

MY friend Richard Hughes, THE SUNDAY TIMES representative in Tokyo, tells me that the fashion in suicides is reverting to old pre-Occupation styles. The live volcano on Oshima Island, at the entrance to Tokyo Bay, was formerly the most fashionable suicide centre in Japan. Star-crossed couples would bind themselves together and leap into the roaring flames from the observation platform on the lip of the crater. Even the laborious erection of a huge mirror to reflect the terrors of the furnace did not deter the suicides. During the Occupation, however, it became more

"sincere" to leap into the sea from the majestic cliffs of Atami.

Now the trend is back to Oshima, and young couples buying one-way ferry-steamers tickets to the volcanic island are being closely scrutinised and questioned by the police. Local innkeepers on the island have mixed feelings on the revival of the suicide trade, as I learn that the younger generation of Japanese suicides are less honourable than their pre-war predecessors: they tend to shirk the strenuous climb to the top of the volcano and instead take poison in leisurely fashion on the mats of their inn rooms, usually leaving their bills unpaid.

Rouge et Noir

AS a dreadful warning to gamblers, I feel it my duty to publish the following statement of the profits of the leading French Casinos for 1952 which I have extracted from the French Ministry of Finance:

	Millions of Francs
Enghien	828
Nice (Palais de la Méditerranée)	496
Deauville	480
Cannes (Municipal Casino)	454
Cannes (Palm Beach)	389
Evian	349
Charbonnières les Bains (near Lyon)	294
Nice (Municipal)	286
Aix en Provence	262
Algiers (Municipal)	177
Vichy (Grand Casino)	152
Le Touquet (Casino de la Forêt)	137,188,350
Trouville	135
Biarritz (Municipal)	116
Aix les Bains (Grand Cercle)	96

I give the profits of Le Touquet in full. I have a proprietary interest in the last four figures.

Ribbentrop's Memoirs

THE death-cell memoirs of Von Ribbentrop are appearing in Germany this week under the title "Between London and Moscow." In them Ribbentrop alleges that the Poles answered the German demand for Danzig and an extra-territorial land-corridor to East Prussia with "challenges to which they were encouraged by London." Sir Winston Churchill is quoted as saying to Ribbentrop, "If Germany gets too strong it will be destroyed again."

The memoirs were written by Ribbentrop while he was awaiting trial in Nuremberg. They are published at the Druffel Verlag by the former Deputy Press Chief in Hitler's Chancellery, Herr Helmut Suendermann, from a nominal office in an Alpine chalet near Munich. The books it publishes are also sold privately at reduced rates to a select circle of Nazi "friends and sympathisers."

Elizabethan Age, No. 1

(TO BE CONTINUED)

MR. HENRY PRICE: . . . "The cleaners only clean up to shoulder height . . . above that they have to call in the Ministry of Works and it takes two men, one to climb the ladder and one to hold it."

Chairman: "If you have a long enough pole do they insist then?" Mr. Daines: "Do they mark the point with red tape?"

Mr. Henry Price: "I think it depends on the cleaner's height. If you want the top of an opaque lampshade over a desk wiped the cleaner must not do it, they must call the Ministry of Works men."

(Page 59. "Report from the Select Committee on House of Commons Accommodation, Etc." H.M.S.O. Seven shillings.)